



John Bruce/Daily Nebraskan

Faded grass, boredom . . .

Nebraska's national image not helped by drab UNL promo

During my first vacation from Nebraska, I learned that our state is sometimes viewed as less than a bastion of progressive thinking. I think it was a boy from San Francisco that shrugged his nose at my home state, and then comforted me by saying "you seem pretty cool for being from Nebraska."

My ego was bruised. I felt as though all my life had been spent in the minor leagues.

After a few more vacations, I decided that kids from the coasts were nothing special. Most seemed like children caught up in cliques and fads while the art of being human drifted past them.



Bob Nelson

I reveled in my self-proclaimed horse sense and earthiness, and in the same qualities of my fellow statesmen. To me, Nebraska was special. The people here were special. One million Will Rogers' enlightening each other with glorious straight talk and subtleties. I became a missionary on vacations. I would defend my people to the end.

Through quagmires of Hollywood and advertising stereotypes, I debated the inherent beauty of my state, brushing aside the belligerent with tales of a million REAL people. Sophisticated, honest, hard-working citizens, all blessed with wit and a genuine understanding of people and the world they live in.

Maybe I exaggerated a little, but my sermons usually worked. Johnny Whoever would go back to New York

and write me letters about the horrors of his city and his people. He would want to move to Lincoln. He would want to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with me and live with the true vanguard.

That was until the first televised Nebraska football game of the year.

Johnny's image of Nebraska and its largest university probably survived intact through the first half. The Big Red Machine marching up and down the field with reserved utilitarian brilliance, doing exactly what must be done to obliterate and nothing more. Tom Osborne watching quietly from the sideline as the announcers dribble on about his brilliance, pausing only to dribble about his saint-like persona.

Johnny was banking his spare change for a plane ticket to this Nirvana, visions of prairie dancing in his head.

His visions collapsed during the next commercial break.

It was the UNL promotional spot . . . starring Chancellor Martin Massengale.

Johnny probably watched in horror as the camera scanned the campus. Lit by stark midday sun and adorned with blazing concrete and browning expanses, this video possessed all the professionalism of a 1950s home video.

Massengale then boomed promotions over the Mister Microphone, speaking with the conviction and style only a comatose accountant could muster.

Within seconds the commercial was over. Johnny and millions of other prospective Nebraskans sat in disbelief. They had been right from the beginning. Nebraska sucks.

Of course, I knew better. This promo spot was just a mistake. Many years ago, the university — in its valiant effort to save money — hired

hungover freshman broadcasting majors to present our school to the world. Massengale was not told that the camera was on. He was not aware of the paramount importance of his performance.

So now its time to try again.

In our new promotional spot, Massengale will be walking majestically through the Willa Cather Garden with the warm glow of a fall prairie sunset peaking out from the sides of Hamilton Hall. The chancellor will eloquently deliver his sermon, ever so slightly eluding to anything Loren Eiseley ever said. He will then stop and proudly survey his campus with a gleam of satisfaction and an ever-so-slight Bono pose.

The next 15 seconds will be spent showing what the university is doing well. The quality cameras and cameramen will make everything Charlton Heston says about our campus fascinating.

The last few seconds will be spent with the chancellor and his campus. He'll say something profound like "The University of Nebraska-Lincoln . . . where the world turns for knowledge" and saunter off towards the sunset.

Before the music can crescendo and the promotional spot of the century can end, Johnny will be somewhere over Ohio, counting the remaining moments of his flight to the promise land.

And native Nebraskans will stand proud with the knowledge that their state finally got represented well in the national media.

But that's just a dream. For now, Johnny's quite satisfied with the coast.

Nelson is a junior news-editorial major and is the Summer Daily Nebraskan editor. He is currently filling in for editorial page editor Charles Lieurance, who is on vacation.

Special circumstances produce special needs

It's the kind of news story that will make many people angry, get them ranting about the waste of their tax dollars, griping about special privileges that they don't have.

An old editor I worked for years ago had a name for that kind of story: boob-rousing.

And I saw a classic example of it this week, when a front-page headline blared: "Jesse Asks to Keep U.S. Bodyguards."

The story was accurate, if overblown. Yes, even though his campaign is over and he lost, Jackson is going to keep his Secret Service bodyguard detail.



Mike Royko

It's not known how long the federal agents will guard him. Nor is it known how many bodyguards he will have. Making that kind of information public could undermine his protection.

But the reaction was predictable. I hadn't finished my morning coffee when an angry suburban woman was on the phone, demanding to know why a defeated candidate should continue being protected.

"I don't see anyone protecting Paul Simon or any of the others," she said.

That's true. Simon, Gephardt and the others are now on their own.

"Then why should they be spending our money on him?" She almost spit out the word "him." "What makes him special?"

I told her that I had the distinct impression that she didn't like Jackson.

"That's right, I don't," she said. "But that's not the point. He should be treated just like the others. He shouldn't receive special treatment."

Wrong. Jackson shouldn't be treated like the other defeated candidates. And he should receive special treatment because he's a special case.

The other candidates don't receive the kind of threats, the crazy letters and the vicious phone calls, that come into Jackson's offices.

Let's be realistic. Of the 200 million-plus people in this country, there are very few who have an obsessive hatred of mild-mannered senators who wear bow ties. So Paul Simon's problem never has been that somebody might shoot him; it's always been finding someone who won't doze off while listening to him.

But of the 200 million-plus people in this country, there are a considerable number who, to put it mildly, dislike Jesse Jackson. To put it less mildly, they hate him.

Most of them are content to just sit there and have a good hate, their stomach acids churning when he's on television, their blood pressure rising when they see his picture in their newspaper.

The vast majority aren't dangerous. They'll swear and call him names and say nasty things that are contrary to the teachings of Jesus, who most of them think highly of, but they aren't a menace to anything but their own stomach linings.

However, when you have millions of haters, in a country that has millions of privately-owned firearms, the law of averages says that you're going to have a certain number of haters who are dangerous. Some hear strange voices in their heads, which is why a rock star can be killed outside his home. Others believe it is their duty to save their country or race from some threat that festers in a dark corner of their brains, which is why presidents, aspiring presidents and civil rights leaders have been shot.

It's not solely that Jackson is black, although that's the No. 1 reason. As well as the No's. 2 and 3 reasons.

But he also inspires strong and deep emotions, stronger and deeper than any politician in my adult life. While that gift can be a ticket to success in politics, it also can be a ticket to the emergency room. Those who have attracted assassins — the Kennedys, Reagan, Martin Luther King, George Wallace — have one thing in common: They weren't bland. They generated electricity. (Don't ask me to explain the woman who tried to do in Gerald Ford; she may be the strangest of them all.)

So, yes, Jackson should be given Secret Service protection as long as he's involved in this presidential campaign and as long as the nuts keep writing and calling. If I were running his security, I'd have him wearing bullet-proof longjohns.

The cost is trivial. The paychecks of those agents doesn't add up to the cost of one tank that doesn't shift gears or one bomber that doesn't fly. And we have a lot of those.

If you want to think of it as just dollars and cents, ask the mayors of Detroit, Chicago and several other riot-torn cities what the cost was in 1968, after Dr. King was killed. If anything, protecting Jackson is a prudent investment.

Or you might think of the cost of his protection this way: If we're going to hate a politician mainly because he's black (please, be honest), we ought to pay for it. Sort of a hate-tax.

Come to think of it, if we ever had a real hate-tax in this country, we could balance the budget.